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International Environmental Technology Centres

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In response to Governing Council decision 17/21, the present report sets out the recent developments relating to international environmental technology centres and makes proposals concerning the future orientation of relevant UNEP activities.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to;

(a) Take note of the present report, including the progress report on the UNEP/International Governmental Technology Centre (IETC);

(b) In line with its decision on the proposed budget for 1996-1997, endorse the acceptance by the Executive Director of UNEP that UNEP should become a co-sponsor organization of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR);

(c) Express its views regarding UNEP's future course of action as regards UNEP's own role and its partnership role in the context of international environmental technology centres, and modalities for financing endogenous capacity-building of scientific and technological centres, in particular of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Recent developments in international forums

1. At its second session, in April 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) stressed, in the context of "Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies, Cooperation and Capacity-building", the need for specific actions to build up and strengthen the endogenous capacities of countries to develop, assess and utilize such technologies through, inter alia, research

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and development, and education and training, while it recognized that the expertise required for technology transfer and cooperation is being developed in many countries. The Commission reiterated the importance of public and private enterprises in technological innovation, development, transfer, use and dissemination. As regards international environmental technology centres, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to invite appropriate organizations of the United Nations system to examine the feasibility of establishing a consultative group on environmental technology centres, bearing in mind the experience of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

2. The 1993 substantive session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decided, by its resolution 73/73, to request the Secretary-General to convene a consultative meeting on a coalition of resources for science and technology for development. The follow-up discussions are being coordinated by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD).

3. The 1994 substantive session of ECOSOC considered the question of science and technology in its Coordination Segment. The Council stated that the 1979 Vienna Programme of Action provided a basis for the assessment and enhancement of policy development at both intergovernmental and inter-agency level and that, at the same time, Agenda 21 provided a new opportunity to revitalize the United Nations system's activities in science and technology. The system should play a more substantive role in assisting developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition. Also, endogenous capacity-building should be at the heart of United Nations activities for science and technology. The Secretary-General was requested to submit a report on the implementation of the conclusions agreed at the 1994 ECOSOC session to the 1995 substantive session of ECOSOC. For this exercise UNEP has designated its focal point. Inter-agency discussions, including the question of linkage and coordination of the work accrued from the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) and CSD, are being coordinated by DPCSD and UNCTAD.

4. The United Nations University (UNU) relies heavily on its international networks of academic researchers and research institutions, and carries out international joint research activities, involving some training. UNU's research and training activities are coordinated by its Academic Division and by a growing number of research and training centres and programmes, namely, the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER, at Helsinki), Institute for New Technologies (INTEC, at Maastricht), the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (INRA, at Accra), the International Institute for Software Technology (IIST, at Macau), the Programme for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean (BIOLAC, at Caracas), Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS, at Tokyo), the Research and Training Centre on Governance, State and Society (at Barcelona) and the International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH in Ontario, Canada). UNU also has international collaborative training activities with 24 universities and other research centres.

5. In October 1994, the first meeting of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) was convened at Islamabad, Pakistan. The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (TWNSO) and the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). The meeting was attended by government representatives from 36 countries and a number of international organizations, including UNEP. The meeting approved a formal agreement to establish COMSATS. It endorsed the establishment of a Network of International Science and Technology Centres for Sustainable Development in the South and agreed that the first nodes of the network be located at ten well-established institutions. The meeting accepted the generous invitation of the Government of Pakistan to set up the headquarters of the network at Islamabad, and to host the Secretariat of COMSATS.

UNEP activities

A. National Cleaner Production Centres

6. In collaboration with UNIDO, the UNEP Industry and Environment/Programme Activity Centre has been engaged in the establishment of National Cleaner

Production Centres (NCPCs) in a number of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Such centres would have the mandate of raising the awareness and strengthening the skills of government and industry managers, of promoting cooperation with other countries, and of launching local demonstration projects and research. A call for proposals was launched in 1992. Thirty-nine proposals have been received to date. They are being evaluated and, with support from the Governments of the Netherlands and Denmark, funding for three years for seven centres has been secured. After three to five years, the centres should become self-sustaining.

B. Progress report on the UNEP/International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC)

7. In accordance with Governing Council decision 16/34, UNEP/IETC was officially opened in April 1994. The Centre's main function is to facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, with specific attention to urban problems such as sewage, air pollution, solid waste, noise, and to the management of freshwater lake and reservoir basins. The strategy of UNEP/IETC is based on Agenda 21 and pursues results-oriented work revolving around three issues: (a) improving access to information on ESTs; (b) fostering technology cooperation, partnerships and transfer; and (c) building endogenous capacity.

8. As a relatively new institution, UNEP/IETC will produce specific outputs which will help establish it as a centre of excellence for the study of EST transfer in its area of speciality. Outputs programmed for 1995 and the 1996-1997 biennium include: a quarterly newsletter *IETC Insight*, and other media materials creating public awareness and disseminating information on ESTs, Local Agenda 21 documents developed for selected cities in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS)/UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP), action plans for sustainable management of selected lake/reservoir basins, training needs assessment surveys in the field of decision-making on transfer and management of ESTs, design and implementation of pilot training programmes of adaptation, application and operation of ESTs, and training materials for technology management of large cities and lake/reservoir basins.

9. As a first set of activities, UNEP/IETC and UNCHS/SCP have embarked on two field-level projects in China and Poland to assist in the identification of local needs for technology transfer through the development of Local Agenda 21 in cities where environmental degradation has reached or may reach serious levels. These activities will form part of the network of SCP, whose goal is to mobilize technical and financial resources from both bilateral and multilateral sources, promote an exchange of know-how, the sharing of resources and the development of common tools and joint actions between cities in different regions of the world. By joining with SCP, UNEP/IETC can offer participating cities a proven methodology of integrated planning and bring the added dimension of helping to identify environmentally sound technologies to address specific environmental problems.

10. The China project is centred in Shenyang but will likely expand to include the city of Wuhan in late 1995. Shenyang is the capital of Liaoning Province, the fourth largest city in China and perhaps one of the most heavily industrialized cities in the world. Most of the technology however is several decades old and therefore very polluting. Two joint UNEP/IETC/SCP missions have been undertaken to date and a Memorandum of Further Cooperation regarding the Sustainable Shenyang Project was signed in March 1995.

11. The work in Poland is focused on Katowice, also a heavily polluted urban centre. The overall objective of this joint UNEP/IETC/SCP effort is to develop a Local Agenda 21 for the Upper Silesian Agglomeration, which covers an area of approximately 1,250 km^2 and consists of a cluster of cities with a total population of 2.3 million inhabitants. UNDP and UNCHS have completed an environmental profile of the city and conducted the first city consultation. UNEP/IETC will specifically assist the project working group on water in identifying and prioritizing drinking water-related projects, and in designing a reorganization of the legislation governing the water sector aimed at harmonizing the relationship between the environment and health sectors. UNEP/IETC is currently designing a workshop on economic tools to assist in the

management of the water sector and exploring other technical assistance inputs with SCP and UNDP to facilitate the transfer of technology to improve water supply, and sewage collection and treatment.

12. Jointly with IE/PAC and INFOTERRA, UNEP/IETC is carrying out an international survey on information sources of ESTs. This is one of the clusters of core activities on ESTs, which were identified by CSD at its second session. A questionnaire has been sent to United Nations organizations, other international and national agencies, industrial organizations, research organizations and other relevant organizations. This survey constitutes a part of the United Nations system-wide response to CSD, which is coordinated by DPCSD (Task Manager for chapter 34 of Agenda 21) and a progress report is to be provided to the third session of CSD in April 1995.

C. UNEP's expanded involvement in CGIAR

13. CGIAR was established in 1972 under the sponsorship of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to finance and manage a network of international agricultural research centres (IARCs). It started with four centres, expanded to 13 by 1980 and to 16 in 1995, each with its own independent board of directors. Thirteen of them are in developing countries. The system was created to address the world food problem based on the belief that investments in scientific research would generate improved agricultural technologies, practices and policies to enable developing countries to produce more food to satisfy the needs of their people. CGIAR spearheaded the Green Revolution which was the main instrument for increased food production in developing countries, especially in South Asia.

14. In addition to its participation as an observer institution in CGIAR, UNEP has been collaborating bilaterally with a number of IARCs, notably the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the International Centre for Research in the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI), the International Plant Genetic Research Institute (IPGRI), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT).

15. In the wake of Agenda 21, CGIAR is now taking on broad issues of sustainable agriculture, while still focusing on food security. As the linkage between environment and agriculture has become more evident, the CGIAR system has oriented its programmes increasingly toward sustainability and has, at the same time, expanded its efforts in important new areas of land-use and ecosystem management.

16. At the ministerial-level meeting of CGIAR held at Lucerne, Switzerland on 9-10 February 1995, it was decided to invite UNEP, which had been a member of CGIAR since 1974, to join the co-sponsors group. By including UNEP among its co-sponsors, the system would stress the importance that it attaches to sustainable natural resources use and environmental issues. The Executive Director of UNEP has expressed her willingness to accept this invitation and for UNEP to become a full co-sponsor as of 1 January 1996, with a view to ensuring that, through UNEP's influence in the CGIAR decision-making structure, environmental considerations are an integral component of all research endeavours leading to the achievement of food security and to sustainable agriculture.

D. Developments in environmental technology centres at country level

17. Under the auspices of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), eight networks of research centres have been established and become operational in order to strengthen technical cooperation among African countries through the development of horizontal scientific and technical links; the responsibility of coordinating their activities was entrusted to their respective regional coordination units.